

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 694

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEHRANKX

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TAGS: PFOR, PORG, BG, IN

SUBJ: LOCAL PRESS COVERAGE OF GENERAL ZIA IN ISTANBUL

REF: A. DACCA 2440 (NOTAL); B. ISLAMABAD 4910

1. ACCORDING TO THE DACCA PRESS, GENERAL ZIAUR RAHMAN'S ADDRESS TO THE ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS CONFERENCE MAY 13 CENTERED ON AN APPEAL FOR SUPPORT IN BANGLADESH'S DISPUTE WITH INDIA OVER FARAKKA BARRAGE AND THE SHARING OF THE GANGES RIVER WATERS. GIVING HEAVY PLAY TO REPORTS FROM BANGLADESHI JOURNALISTS IN ISTANBUL, DACCA NEWSPAPERS ALSO REPORT THAT TURKISH PRIME MINISTER DEMIREL IN A MEETING WITH ZIA EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR BANGLADESH'S STAND ON FARAKKA.

2. GENERAL ZIA IS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID TO THE CONFERENCE THAT THE "ONLY EQUITABLE" SOLUTION TO THE FARAKKA PROBLEM IS THE FAIR ALLOCATION OF GANGES WATERS ON A MONTHLY
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BASIS COVERING THE WHOLE YEAR. IN THE INTERESTS OF

PEACE AND STABILITY IN THE REGION, HE HOPED THAT THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE WOULD EXERCISE ITS INFLUENCE FOR AN EXPEDITIOUS AND SATISFACTORY SOLUTION. ZIA CLAIMED THAT THE DIVERSION OF WATERS THREATENED "THE WELL BEING OF THE PEOPLE OF BANGLADESH AND INDEED THEIR VERY SURVIVAL", AND REGRETTED THAT AFTER NEGOTIATIONS OVER THE ISSUE OVER THE PAST 25 YEARS, A SOLUTION WAS NOWHERE IN SIGHT. INDIA, HE SAID, BY IGNORING A BILATERAL AGREEMENT AND UNILATERALLY WITHDRAWING WATERS, WAS IMPOSING ON BANGLADESHIS AN ADDITIONAL BURDEN BEYOND THEIR CAPACITY TO SUSTAIN AND THUS THE ALREADY DIFFICULT PROCESS OF NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION IN BANGLADESH WOULD BE SEVERELY RETARDED. REFERRING TO THE DISPUTE OVER DEFINING THE LEAN SEASON OF GANGES FLOW, ZIA REPORTEDLY SAID THAT INDIA WAS INSISTING ON PRECONDITIONS THAT WOULD RESTRICT THE SCOPE OF THE BILATERAL TALKS. ON INDO-BANGLADESH RELATIONS IN GENERAL, ZIA MENTIONED THE "CONTINUING PROVOCATIONS DISTURBING OUR BORDERS" AND "OTHER ISSUES" IN RECENT MONTHS THAT THREATEN TO AFFECT THE CLOSE AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS EXISTING BETWEEN BANGLADESH AND INDIA.

3. ON SUBCONTINENTAL RELATIONS, ZIA SAID THE BDG WANTED GOOD RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES AND OPEN DIALOGUE TO RESOLVE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES. HE ALSO REFERRED TO THE POSSIBILITY OF THE GROWTH OF COOPERATION AND FRIENDSHIP WITH PAKISTAN FOLLOWING RECONCILIATION.

4. ON ISLAMIC TIES, ZIA REPORTEDLY REITERATED BANGLADESH SUPPORT FOR THE LEGITIMATE CAUSE OF THE MUSLIMS, INCLUDING THE

PALESTINIANS AND THE TURKIST CYPRIOTS. HE IS REPORTED TO HAVE THNAKED THE ISLAMIC GROUP FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF THE BDG ON BASELINE AT THE RECENT LOS SESSION AND CALLED SUCH SUPPORT A DIRECT MANIFESTATION OF THE SPIRIT OF ISLAMIC SOLIDARITY AND COOPERATION.

5. BANGLADESHI JOURNALISTS ALSO WROTE THAT IN A MEETING ON MAY 12, PRIME MINISTER DEMIREL TOLD ZIA THAT BANGLADESH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COULD ALWAYS DEPEND ON TURKEY'S WHOLEHEARTED SUPPORT FOR ALL HER PROBLEMS, WHETHER REGIONAL OR INTERNATIONAL. DEMIREL IS SAID TO HAVE TOLD ZIA THAT A STRONG BANGLADESH WAS VITAL NOT ONLY IN THE INTERESTS OF SUBCONTINENTAL STABILITY BUT ALSO FOR THE RCD COUNTRIES OF TURKEY, IRAN, AND PAKISTAN. THE NEWS ACCOUNTS SAY THAT DEMIREL EXPRESSED GRAVE CONCERN OVER THE SHARING OF GANGES WATERS AND CHARACTERIZED THE BDG POSITION AS NORMAL AND

TECHNICALLY CORRECT. HE REPORTEDLY GAVE ASSURANCES THAT TURKEY WOULD EXTEND EVERY POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE TO BANGLADESH IN ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND DEFENSE FIELDS.

7. THE DACCA PRESS ALSO REPORTS THAT ZIA HAS MET WITH A NUMBER OF DELEGATION HEADS INCLUDING PAKISTAN'S AZIZ AHMED WITH WHOM HE DISCUSSED MATTERS OF MUTUAL INTEREST. THERE IS MUCH SPECULATION HERE THAT ZIA WILL VISIT A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES ON HIS WAY HOME. THE PRESS REPORTS THAT ZIA WILL VISIT SAUDI ARABIA AND WE HAVE HEARD THAT HE MAY ALSO GO TO CAIRO. STOPS IN IRAN AND PAKISTAN (REF B) STRIKE US AS LIKELY POSSIBILITIES AS WELL.
BOSTER

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